

Target Zero Awards

Achievements in Traffic Safety

1. Category

- ☐ Impaired Driving
- ☐ Speed-Related Collisions
- ☒ Occupant Protection
- ☐ Run-Off-Road Collisions
- ☐ Intersection Collisions
- ☐ Traffic Data Systems

2. Entry Name

Project/Program Title: Seatbelt Patrols

Individual/Group Name: Washington State Patrol (Detachment 3)

3. Contact Information for person submitting entry

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4. Identify the project, program, or effort. This is the executive summary of the entry that describes

a) The situation or problem

Skagit County has continued to deal with the lowest seatbelt compliance rate in District 7, which encompasses Snohomish, Island, Skagit and Whatcom County. Detachment 3 has always made a concerted effort at targeting these offenders in an attempt to drive down fatal collisions. Our actions also follow on the heels of a local Superior Court judge ruling that the seatbelt law was vague and therefore unlawful. She was later overturned in Washington State Supreme Court. In any event this raised huge problems in Skagit County that still exist today. Citizens believe they do not have to wear seatbelts.

b) Actions taken

In 2006, Detachment 3 contacted 1,592 seatbelt violators and issued 1,476 seatbelt tickets. This is a 92% enforcement rate. However, there still seemed to be a lingering problem in 2007 of low seatbelt compliance, especially on the side streets and state routes. As a result, Detachment 3 developed a plan to aggressively target seatbelt violators. This plan was centered on the statewide plan for the year.

The first thing that Detachment 3 did was to set specific yearly goals as well as monthly goals. The goal for the year was to contact 2,000 seatbelt violators. The second goal was to contact at least 500 seatbelt violators during the click-it-or-ticket campaign in May. In regards to the first goal, Detachment 3 has made 2,342 seatbelt contacts and has issued 2,281 tickets through the, which is a 97.4% enforcement rate. In regards to the second goal, Detachment 3 contacted 617 seatbelt violators in the month of May, issuing 612 tickets, which is a 99% enforcement rate. Finally, Detachment 3's efforts not only ranks them number one in District for seatbelt contacts and tickets issued but it ranks them number one in the state.

In addition to the hard work throughout the year, Detachment 3 was the first detachment in District 7 to conduct a night time seatbelt emphasis. This occurred in numerous locations throughout the county, which included but was not limited to; SR-20 at Goldenrod Road, SR-538 at Riverside Drive and SR-536 at mile post 4.25. These night time seatbelt emphasis patrols started in May and concluded in October with four nighttime seatbelt emphasis patrols on State Route 20 at mile post 60 from 1900-2300.

c) The result

In 2006, from January 1 through October 31, Skagit County (APA 31) had 11 fatality collisions which resulted in 14 deaths. For the 2006 calendar year there were 15 fatality collisions and 18 fatalities. Six of the first 11 fatality collisions in 2006 and nine of the 14 fatalities involved the lack of seatbelt compliance. This is equivalent to 54% of the first 11 fatality collisions for 2006 involved the lack of seatbelt compliance. An even more staggering number is the percentage of the total deaths that involved the lack of seatbelt compliance, which is 64% or nine of the 14 deaths. For the 2006 calendar year, 46% of the fatal collisions and 55% of the total deaths involved a non-compliance with the seatbelt law.

In 2007, through October 31, Skagit County (APA 31) has had nine fatality collisions resulting in nine fatalities. One of the fatality collisions is a non-traffic related fatality and one of these collisions is one related to a motorcycle. This means that seven of the nine collisions are traffic related and involved passenger cars that are required to comply with the seatbelt law. Two of the fatality collision and fatalities involved the lack of seatbelt compliance. This is equivalent to 28.5% of the collisions.

5. Specify the proven strategies, best practices, or innovative strategies with a strong evaluation component used.

Even though Washington State ranks among the top two in seatbelt compliance, there continues to be a concerted effort at targeting seatbelt offenders. In part, some of this focus has been re-directed to night time seatbelt patrols as it is well known that the compliance rate drops as much as 10 percentage points during the hours of darkness. In addition to the nighttime patrols, the seatbelt patrols have shifted away from the interstate system where the compliance rate is high, to county roads and state routes where the seatbelt compliance rate drops. This is evidenced by the higher number of fatality collisions on state routes and county roads involving lower seatbelt compliance.

Seatbelt compliance, enforcement and education continue to be one of the goals listed in the Department and District Seven strategic plan. Part of the strategic plan for the Department is creating partnerships with the Washington State Traffic Safety Commission. Detachment 3 has demonstrated a strong desire to support these partnerships by actively participating in the click it or ticket campaign in May, with over 600 seatbelt contacts. In addition to that, Detachment 3 has actively participated in no less than 10 night time seatbelt emphasis patrols during 2007.

Part of the strategic plan for District 7 in 2007 was to reduce the percentage of non-belted occupants in fatal collisions from 39% in 2006 to 29% in 2007. Detachment 3 has actively and aggressively adopted this as a personal goal. This is represented by the drastic drop of 55% non-belted occupants fatalities in 2006 to 28.5% of non-belted occupant fatalities through October 31, 2007.

It is clear that developing strategic plans at the departmental level, district level and the detachment level can have a positive impact on the goal of "Target Zero." No one agency can achieve this goal by itself and therefore it is critical that partnerships are supported at the local level. Detachment 3 has done this with both the click it or ticket campaign in May and the ongoing night time seatbelt emphasis patrols. This support of departmental goals and other agency goals has had a positive impact on the fatalities related to non-belted occupants within Skagit County.